

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 ACDA-05

SAJ-01 OMB-01 /061 W

----- 035382

R 191320Z JAN 76

FM AMCONSUL MILAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4515

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: SOCIALIST PROVINCIAL CONGRESS, MILAN, JAN 17-18, 1976

1. SUMMARY - MILAN SOCIALISTS (PSI) MEETING IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY GAVE OVERWHELMING BACKING TO DEMARTINO'S DECISION TO TOPPLE MORO GOVERNMENT AND CENTERED TWO DAY DEBATE ON CRITICISM OF BOTH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS.

2. MORE THAN A THOUSAND PSI MILITANTS MET IN MILAN PREPARATORY TO LOMBARDY REGIONAL CONGRESS JAN. 23-24 AND 40TH NATIONAL CONGRESS FEBRUARY 4-8. IN A SMOKE FILLED AUDITORIUM GOOD FOR OUR TOBACCO EXPORTS BUT BAD FOR OUR OBSERVERS THE PREVALENTLY YOUNG DELEGATES DEBATED PSI POLICY AGAINST BACKDROP OF GOVERNMENT CRISIS TRIGGERED BY THEIR NATIONAL LEADERS. PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS WERE BETTINO CRAXI, YOUNG MILANESE DEPUTY SPOKEN OF AS POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO DEMARTINO, YOUNGER LUIGI VERTEMATI, PROVINCIAL SECRETARY AND MILAN SOCIALIST MAYOR ALDO ANIASI.

3. ALTHOUGH SOME 20 DELEGATES POKE IN ADDITION TO USUAL COMMITTEE RAPORTEURS ON RESOLUTIONS, DIFFERENCES

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WERE SURPRISINGLY FEW OR LOW KEY.

4. WHILE HANDLED FAIRLY CAREFULLY, TOUCHIEST ISSUE THAT RAN THROUGH ENTIRE DEBATE WAS CRITICISM OF COMMUNIST PARTY. VERTEMATI AND CRAXI AS WELL AS MOST OTHER SPEAKERS EXAMINED QUESTION WITH VARYING DEGREES OF DIRECTNESS AND WHILE MOST SPOKE CRITICALLY, SOME WARNED AGAINST PSI TAKING EQUAL DISTANCE FROM PCI AND DC. PREVALENT THEME, HOWEVER, WAS THAT PCI WAS IN THE WRONG. IT WAS WRONG TO TRY TO WORK DIRECT DEAL WITH DC ABANDONING UNITY OF THE LEFT. IT WAS WRONG TO JOIN DC, NATIONAL PRESS AND BUSINESS TO CONDEMN PSI FOR BRINGING DOWN MORO. IT WAS WRONG TO ATTACK PSI ECONOMIC PROGRAM. IT WAS WRONG TO USE TRADE UNIONS AGAINST PSI AND TO USE STRONG ARM TACTICS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT. SOCIALISTS COMPLAINED THAT AFTER THEY HAD MADE POSSIBLE COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AFTER JUNE 15 ELECTIONS, COMMUNISTS WERE NOW ALIGNED WITH DC AGAINST THEM. THEY ARGUED THAT KEY TO GETTING RIGHT PUBLIC POLICY IN ITALY WAS UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS PARTIES AND NOT DC-PCI DEAL. FAILURE OF COMMUNISTS TO BACK SOCIALISTS ON THEIR CONCRETE ECONOMIC PROGRAM FOR A NEW GOVERNMENT CALLED FOR "CLARIFICATION" OF COMMUNIST POSITION. POLICY SHOULD BE DEBATED WITH THEM TO ATTAIN AS MUCH UNITY OF LEFT AS POSSIBLE BUT WITHOUT ACCEPTING PCI DICTATION ACCORDING TO CRAXI.

5. SOCIALISTS DELEGATES CLAIMED PSI WAS BREAKING NEW GROUND AND RESPONSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION OF PCI AWAY FROM ITS STALINIST BACKGROUND. THIS PROCESS SHOULD BE CONTINUED THROUGH A CONSTANT DIALECTICAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS. STATEMENTS THAT PSI NOT ABOUT TO TRADE HEGEMONY OF DC FOR HEGEMONY OF PCI GOT WARM DELEGATE APPROVAL.

6. WHILE CAPITALISM GIVEN USUAL WHIPPING, LIKE THAT RESERVE BY PROIBITIONISTS FOR RUM, SOVIET COMMUNISM NEEDED, WESTERN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY HAILED AND US MOSTLY IGNORED.

7. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TOOK BRUNT OF CRITICISM FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FAILURE OF CENTER-LEFT, FOR ECONOMIC CRISIS AND FOR MOST OTHER BAD NEWS. MAIN THEME WAS THAT SOCIALISTS HAD NO CONFIDENCE IN RIGHTIST AND CLERICAL DC.

8. DELEGATES ROARED APPROVAL OF DEMARTINO DECISION TO BRING DOWN MORO GOVERNMENT AND CRAXI'S STATEMENT THAT WHILE PSI OPPOSED EARLY ELECTIONS, IF WAS READY TO TAKE THE ISSUE TO THE VOTERS IF FORCED TO DO ST. HE

ALSO SAID PSI DID NOT WANT PCI IN GOVERNMENT BUT
COULDN'T SEE HOW TO GET CHANGE NEEDED IN NATIONAL
POLICY WITHOUT THE ASSENT OF THE ENTIRE LEFT.

9. ABORTION AGAIN MERITS SEPARATE MENTION SINCE IT
APPEARS TO BE JUST AS HOT AN ISSUE WITH PSI AS WITH
CHURCH ALTHOUGH DC IS VERY GUN SHY OF IT. COMMUNIST-
DC DEAL ON ABORTION LEGISLATION CLEARLY ON SOCIALISTS' MIND
AND PERHAPS LOUDEST APPROVAL GIVEN BY OVERWHELMINGLY
MALE AUDIENCE TO WOMAN RAPPORTEUR ON ABORTION. SHE
CALLED FOR NO COMPROMISE ON SOCIALIST ABORTION BILL
AND FOR NEW NATIONAL REFERENDUM IF NECESSARY TO GET
IT.

10. CONCLUDING RESOLUTION RECOMMENDED NEW GOVERNMENT
BASED ON PATTERN OF LOMBARDY IN WHICH DC AND PSI HAD
COMMUNIST ABSTENTION FOR INVESTITURE AND COMMUNIST
SUPPORT FOR PROGRAM.

1. CONCLUSIONS. PRETTY CLEAR THAT MILAN SOCIALISTS,
AT LEAST, ARE NOT BACKING AWAY FROM SHOWDOWN WITH
COMMUNISTS AND DC. THEY ARE ANGRY AT NATIONA PRESS -
CORRIERE CITED AS HANDING OUT COMMUNIST LINE - AND
INCREASINGLY SORE AT COMMUNISTS WHOM THEY CLAIM ARE
UNDERCUTTING THEM. PERHAPS MAIN IMPRESSION WAS
SOCIALIST EVEN HANDEDNESS IN CRITICIZING DC AND
COMMUNISTS. IT IS NO NEWS THAT DC GOT CLEAREST,
SHARPEST AND MOST. IT IS NEWS THAT COMMUNISTS GOT A
GOODLY SHARE JUST BECAUSE MARXIST POLITICIANS HAVE TO
TREAD VERY GINGERLY WHEN BREAKING TABOOS OF WORKING
CLASS UNITY.FINA

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING AGENDA, PARTY MEETINGS, SOCIALISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MILAN00109
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760019-0997
From: MILAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760144/aaaabngk.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 APR 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <13 MAY 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOCIALIST PROVINCIAL CONGRESS, MILAN, JAN 17-18, 1976
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, PINT, IT, PSI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006